

DIVERSITY CAFE

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

Gender Diversity

Women's Equality Day

Women's Equality Day is a day proclaimed each year by the United States President to commemorate the granting of the vote to women throughout the country on an equal basis with men. On August 26, 1920, after three generations of an unrelenting, brilliant, courageous, and political campaign, women in the United States won the right to vote.

Let's celebrate the achievements of women and recommit ourselves to the goal of gender equality. Let's continue to uphold the foundational American principles that we are all equal and that each of us deserves a chance to pursue our dreams.

Café News

If you're interested in joining an Employee Affinity Group at Public Works, please contact Diversity Manager Flora Wieggers at (626) 458-5193.

Café Quote of the Month

"Social gains are never handed out. They must be seized."

- Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*

Why is Gender Diversity in the Workplace so Important?

Despite 40 years of focusing on equal opportunity and diversity initiatives, most organizations continue to have very low levels of representation of women in senior leadership positions. There has been considerable research on the impact of Gender Diversity in the workplace. The debate on Gender Diversity on organizational leadership, performance, and profitability has shifted from an issue of fairness and equality to a question of superior performance. In summary, organizations with more women in leadership roles were found to outperform their rivals.

Studies on the impact of greater diversity in team exercises found that (a) individuals are, on average, likely to do more preparation for any exercise that they know is going to involve working with a diverse rather than a homogenous group; (b) that a wider range of available data inputs are likely to be debated in a diverse rather than a homogenous setting; and (c) that the diverse group, in the end, is more likely to generate the correct answer to a particular problem than is the case for the homogenous group. In conclusion, the majority group improves its own performance in response to minority involvement.

In another fascinating study, the collective intelligence of a group was not mostly determined by the average or maximum intelligence of the individuals within the group, but was better explained by the style and type of interaction between the

group members. Specifically, the authors showed that the collective group intelligence was higher when (a) the social sensitivity of the individual group members was higher; (b) where there was a more even distribution in the conversation between individual group members (rather than having the conversation dominated by one or two people); and (c) when there were more women in the group. The three explanations aren't mutually exclusive: specifically, this test and other work has shown that women are typically more socially sensitive (identified as better at reading other people's thoughts) than men. Hence, by virtue of having a greater proportion of women in the mix, the social sensitivity of the group is naturally likely to be higher. Also, studies show that men and women have different leadership styles, therefore diverse teams benefit from a better mix of leadership skills.

To achieve sustainable benefits and ensure there is a sufficient pipeline of talented senior women for leadership positions, organizations will need to identify, expose, and deal with the unconscious assumptions and biases that hold back women and that give subtle advantages to men. This requires changing cultures to make them less male dominated and more embracing of both genders. Without a resolute and ongoing commitment from the leadership teams of organizations, improvements in gender diversity and the resulting benefits are unlikely to be achieved or sustained.



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